

Criteria D – Comprehensive Plan

Over our twelve years in business we've developed procedures that are applied to each new project. We typically break each project down into the three phases of Planning and Pre-Production, Production and Post-Production and Mastering.

Planning and Pre-production

Every new project starts with a kick-off and brainstorming meeting with our team, the client team and any special project advisors or experts. Depending on the complexity of the project, these meetings range anywhere from a two-hour introductory session to a three-day planning retreat.

A kick-off meeting is used to introduce all members of the project to each other, establish working procedures, and to brainstorm and exchange creative ideas about the project. Primarily, of course, we view the meeting as an opportunity to hear about the client's hopes and concerns about the upcoming project, and to learn about their goals for the media piece or pieces, and what key messages or subjects they hope to include.

Often, North Shore has been selected through an RFP process and there is already a creative treatment and production schedule to be analyzed and discussed. We'll review technical choices regarding acquisition formats and confirm that our initial recommendation is still the best approach. If the meeting is on-site we will also use this time to look at historical image collections a park or museum may have, and, if it is a public lands-based project, to begin to get to know the landscape itself.

We return from the kickoff meeting with notes, images and ideas. We then continue our research, preparatory to writing a treatment. Research may involve reading historical texts, conducting extensive interviews with historians, biologists or other content experts, and reviewing existing archive still or motion images for potential inclusion in the piece. Research may also include another, more extensive site visit to scout potential key locations, and meet any interviewees in person. We will develop a more detailed, fully fleshed out schedule as part of the research process. We are in touch with the client throughout the research process as questions come up, and actively solicit their feedback.

We typically produce extensive treatments for review by the client team. These documents range from five to ten pages in length, and outline our vision of the style and content of the film in narrative form. We have found that this is the best way for the client team to review content and approach, prior to the investment in a full script.

After the client team has reviewed and commented on the treatment, we move to a full scripting stage. Scripts are written and delivered in either a classic screenplay or two-column format, depending on client preference. For interactive pieces we will also develop navigation flow documents for review. Client review periods for all deliverables are typically two weeks, however these can be set to any length that the client requests.

As the script is refined through client reviews (typically they will see two to three drafts from North Shore), we will also be refining and detailing our draft filming schedule, taking into account key seasonal events at the site, the availability of any on-camera experts or interviews, and so forth. If any portions of the show are to be acted, or feature re-enactors, we'll begin to cast for those roles, and share audition tapes with the client team for input.

As the script moves towards being locked we'll enter the more logistics-based world of pre-production; any final location scouting, booking crew and locations, securing any necessary permits, working with aviation companies to plan aerial filming, and so forth. Depending on the subject matter, pieces may be fully or partially storyboarded.

On occasion, we may begin filming prior to having the final locked script; typically in these cases we are securing general scenic seasonal footage that would otherwise necessitate waiting a year. We would always request an approval from the client simply for that portion of the filming. More typically, the script is completely locked before filming begins.

Production

We are fortunate to have worked on a wide variety of interpretive and educational films. We've worked with crews as small as three people, and as large (including cast) as thirty-five. We've filmed on Super 35mm film, Super 16mm film, HDCAM, DVCProHD, Digital Betacam, Beta SP and DVCAM. We are currently in the midst of our first tapeless production, filming full-raster DVCProHD captured on P2 cards.

Our skill set ranges from full-scale historical re-enactment, on the one hand, to small crews working in remote wilderness settings, on the other. For the latter we use floatplanes, rafts and snowmachines to travel, tents for accommodation, and solar panels to power our equipment. We have a strong track record of presenting 'real people' on camera in a sensitive and authentic way, and work hard to put them at ease on set. It may sound obvious, but we are always focused on producing the most beautiful images we can in the field; we like our films to be visually driven.

Through all of these variables certain things remain constant. We always take great care to select the best directors of photography, sound recordists, gaffers and other crew for each job, based on their particular strengths. We always work in the best acquisition format that we can, again with an eye to what is right for the project. We are realistic about how many days we need in the field to create the planned footage and scenes for the film. Whenever technically possible we review footage in the field to be sure the footage is technically perfect and telling the story in the way we anticipated. Sometimes, of course, we find new storytelling opportunities that might be better than what we had planned – that's the wonder of documentary production, and we welcome those opportunities. We are respectful and considerate of interviewees and on-camera

subjects, and recognize that our working day needs to revolve around theirs, and not vice versa.

Post-Production

North Shore has two HD edit suites and one standard definition edit suite in house. The suites run Final Cut Pro 6; we also make use of Motion, Adobe After Effects, and DVD Studio Pro on a regular basis. We have DVCProHD, Beta SP and multiple DVCAM decks in-house; we rent HDCAM and Digital Betacam decks on an as-needed basis.

When the first tapes come back from the field they are often dubbed to DVCAM for logging purposes; dubs are sent off to our transcription provider. Sometimes they are also cloned for safety as well. Our footage is then logged and interviews transcribed.

Offline editing will usually take place from the DVCAM dubs of the footage, unless the project is small and all footage can be captured at full resolution. The producer/director will list interview and footage selects for the editor, and update the script to include actual interview soundbites and sometimes particular shots.

For projects that have a long-term, four-season shooting schedule we will edit after each shoot and share individual scenes with the client as we build the film. We have found this to be a great tool to further refine our thinking about the film as we prepare for following shoots.

Over the years we have moved from a very 'hands-on' role for the producer/director in post, where he or she is basically in the edit suite all the time, to more of a 'hands-off' model where the editor has more freedom to cut individual scenes and the producer/director checks in more occasionally. Though we are not completely wedded to either approach we have found the latter to be more efficient and to allow more room for another layer of creative interpretation.

During the post-production phase we also secure all archival materials for inclusion in the film. These may be historical still images or period film. These are typically licensed just for the specific use and venue of the project; we are careful to work with clients on rights issues so that they have a clear understanding of any restrictions, such as whether the completed film can be sold at a visitor center on DVD, for example.

We typically produce a rough cut, fine cut and final master for our clients, though we are happy to add additional reviews for clients as necessary. Our rough cuts are generally very well-developed, as we have found that 'rough' rough cuts can be disconcerting to clients without prior exposure to the filmmaking process. Typically our fine cuts will be recaptured from the camera tapes at full resolution and will include final narration and music. Final audio sweetening and color correction happen after the fine cut stage.

For interactive pieces we would typically supply screen comps for client review to lock in a design, and also refine the navigational flow of the piece. We would then build a fully working model of the interactive, and integrate any video or other media elements into the piece. The model would go through two rounds of client review and revision – one at the prototype stage and another at the alpha stage, prior to being finalized.

We master smaller film projects in-house, to either DVCProHD, Digital Betacam or DVCAM. Other projects may be mastered at a dedicated post house to HDCAM. We always work with dedicated post-production houses for color correction in either SD or HD, and also for audio mix and sweetening.

We create complex, menu-driven DVDs in-house, and anticipate that we will be able to do the same with Blu-Ray, once that technology is affordable. Typically if we are captioning a project we will do so on the DVD though we have also put both subtitles and closed-captioning on clones of master tapes as well.

Proper project archiving is very important at North Shore. All elements of the project are archived together. If clones of camera tapes have been made, those continue to be stored offsite. DVD-Roms of all Final Cut project files, final audio mixes and any non-tape based media are also created. As part of this archiving process the agreements for all licensed stills and footage are documented and archived. Depending on the particular nature of the contract, originals or copies of some or all archived materials may be shipped to the client as well.

Quality Control

Our approach to quality control has always been simple. It may sound like a cliché, but we demand of ourselves the best work we can produce, and we demand the same of our subcontractors and production partners. We are also very careful about whom we work with; we have found that by selecting the best possible people for the job, excellent results are the norm. We take our creative responsibility to the finished project very seriously.

The mechanics of our quality control are more involved. We are careful to communicate openly and frequently with clients to make sure expectations and creative direction are commonly shared and aligned. We establish the key messages and goals for the project early on with the client, and return to these messages and goals during scripting, production and post to make sure that our messaging is being maintained through the creative approach.

All work, whether a script, rough cut or a graphic, is checked by at least one team member additional to its creator, prior to being sent to the client for review. In the field, we monitor our footage as it is being captured, and frequently review it at night as well. We typically build a detailed schedule with deadlines for deliverables at the beginning of a project, and measure our progress against that schedule.

Project Management with Subcontractors

Most of our projects involve subcontractors in key roles. Often Rory Banyard, North Shore's owner, will executive produce a project with a freelance producer/director/writer, helping to shape the creative direction of the project at the early stages, reviewing scripts, and helping to shape the film in the edit. At other times the subcontractors may be directors of photography, editors, or multi-media producers.

We have found through experience that the key to effective project management is frequent and open communication, within the firm, with the client team, and with subcontractors. We believe that being clear about the goals and creative direction of the project, and monitoring the timeline, are critical management tasks, whether we're communicating with staffers or subcontractors.

We have worked with all of the subcontractors listed in our proposal before, mostly on multiple projects. Media production is largely a freelance industry and we have found that our subcontractors take their work and their own personal reputation very seriously. We are careful about who we work with and believe that that care has paid off in strong, creative and close working relationships, and a superior final product.

The Rights in Data Clause

Our understanding of the Rights in Data clause as spelled out in the contract is that all work is produced essentially on a 'work for hire' basis and that North Shore Productions retains no rights to the raw footage, finished program, or any other project element that we create under an IDIQ contract, and that the government retains unlimited rights to re-use or reproduce the data in any fashion and for any purpose.

We understand that we would only have the right to assert copyright to particular raw data with the prior written permission of the Contracting Officer, and that even if copyright is granted the government shall have an indefinite non-exclusive license to use all of the data in any fashion and for any purpose. We further understand that we may be directed by the Contracting Officer to assign copyright to the government.

We understand that we cannot include third-party copyrighted content without written permission from the Contracting Officer, and that we must secure and provide a license for its use that permits all of the usage envisioned for the project.

We understand that we do not have the right to use or allow or authorize anyone else to use any of the data we produce without the written permission of the Contracting Officer. Finally we understand that under this contract we agree to indemnify the government against any liability for violations of privacy, trade secrets or copyright arising out of the creation, delivery and publication of the data.